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S E C R E T ANKARA 004231

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2013

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: ARREST OF TURKISH SF CLOSES BORDER

REF: ANKARA 4230

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch, reasons 1.5, b/d.

1. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

2. (S) Ambassador spoke with MFA Acting U/S Baki Ilkin the morning of July 5 concerning the arrest of Turkish Special Forces in Iraq (reftel). Ilkin said that US military authorities in northern Iraq told the Turkish Liaison team with the 173rd in Iraq that an unidentified group of Turks had been arrested and that those held could be released if they were identified and if there were a request for release through diplomatic channels. Ilkin reported that the American unit involved was observed Friday morning in Kirkuk training to storm buildings. After a number of repetitions, they headed for Suleimaniya accompanied by PUK security with a convoy totaling some 40 vehicles. They entered the building housing the Turkish SF behind two smoke bombs.

3. (S) In contact with OCPA chief of staff, Ambassador was unable to confirm the offer allegedly made to the Turkish Liaison team to release the suspects if identified. From Baghdad, we understand that the investigation of the alleged participation of one of the Turkish Special Forces in a plot to assassinate the mayor of Kirkuk is continuing.

4. (S) We have indications from US military sources that an additional raid in which another 10 Turkish Special Forces were possibly taken into custody may have occurred the morning of July 5. We also understand that the Turks have closed and secured the Habur gate with armed guards as a result of this incident. BG Kilicarslan, Deputy Commander of the Turkish Special Forces is on his way to Suleimaniya with a delegation of 16 people in three cars to meet with PUK "PM" Barham Seleh and check on the situation.

5. (U) The mainstream Turkish "Hurriyet" newspaper this morning contained a banner front page report of the incident noting the US allegations of an assassination plot. PM Erdogan called the event "an extremely distressing incident" and "not acceptable." DCHOD general Buyukanit said the story is regrettably true. He categorized the allegation that Turks were plotting an assassination of the Governor of Kirkuk as nonsense. One news report said Secretary Powell told Gul that whatever was necessary would be done. Another claimed that as a result US officials have pressed for Turkey's military withdrawal from Iraq. Journalists have begun pressing the Embassy for a reaction.

6. (S) Comment: Based on the conversations the evening of July 4 between FM Gul and the Secretary, CHOD Gen Ozkok and EUCOMCDR Gen Jones, the Turkish leadership believes that the American senior leadership is now working to resolve this incident expeditiously. This expectation and the relative calm of a weekend provide a short period in which the incident could be brought to a conclusion. However, if the incident is not resolved and the Turkish Special Forces are not released by Monday morning, there will be a rapidly accelerating political and public reaction in Turkey that would seriously damage to US Turkish relations with broad repercussions. Embassy Ankara is ready for any action that can contribute to resolving the issue within the next 48 hours.

PEARSON